

Another anti-crime drive in S-W region starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special anti-crime drive with a 'different modus operandi' is likely to be launched midnight tonight in the south-west to nab 'extremists and hardened criminals' and recover illegal arms, a highly placed source said.

All preparations have been completed to swoop down on criminals in Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira districts in accordance with a fresh list prepared recently.

The drive will involve more than 3,000 active policemen now in Bagerhat. They will be joined by select officers and personnel from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and the Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

"The officers and personnel from the DMP and CMP are specially trained to combat serious criminals," the source said.

Most of the DMP and CMP officers and personnel have already been sent to different police stations, camps and outposts in the three districts.

According to sources at the office of the deputy inspector general of police, Khulna Range, four special camps have been set up in the region from where senior police officers will monitor the anti-crime drive. All police stations have been manned by additional forces and put on high alert.

The drive will start upon receipt of the green light from top officials at the home ministry, sources said.

Navy ships

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Massive damage to both ships and four containers falling overboard in the Karanphuli river was also caused under the impact of the collision. Movement of vessels in the port channel was temporarily suspended.

The probe body in its four-point recommendation suggested the CPA double its present strength of pilots and formulate interim provision to engage pilots from outside for piloting vessels until the manpower in this department is increased.

It also suggested the CPA ensure enough rest time for the pilots during working hours to get better service from them.

Bangladesh Navy and the Department of Shipping also constituted two separate probe bodies.

The CPA should procure a high-capacity rescue vessel as soon as possible to salvage the sunk ships at the port channel and the outer anchorage in the Bay, the probe committee suggested in its 100-page report.

The committee blamed the Panamanian vessel directly and the local flag carrier indirectly for the accident but said the hit on the navy ships by the Eagle Strength was 'incidental, not intentional'.

Quoting the statement sent to the committee by the navy, the report said 18 navy ships and the jetty installation of BNS Isha Kha incurred damage more or less under the impact of collision and 16 navy staff of different levels were injured.

The probe report mentioned that the main causes of the collision are reckless sailing at high speed by the Eagle Strength and heavy water flow in the port channel towards the ship adding to its speed.

Guard killed inside Agrani Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified assailants stabbed and strangled a security guard of Agrani Bank inside its Chakbazar branch in the early hours yesterday.

The body of Abul Khayer, 56, was recovered from the toilet of the bank on the first floor of six-storied Chak Circular Market with marks of injuries in his abdomen and left thigh and a napkin tied around his throat.

Locals said sweeper Jasmin called Khayer at 6:00am, as he used to sleep inside but got no response.

Ruhul Amin, manager of the branch, also received no response from Khayer and opened the gate with duplicate keys. He found Khayer dead in the toilet.

The body was sent to Mitford hospital for autopsy.

Hailing from Baluakandi village in Gazaria, Munsiganj, Khayer had been working in the bank for the last 11 years and was two months away from his retirement.

Police said criminals killed Khayer within the first six hours of yesterday and took the keys to lock the gate from outside.

Asked why the murderers did not take money or anything, police and Amin said the killing might be a result of personal enmity. Police further said Khayer had enmity with his cousins Shahjahan and Mizan. But Haris Mia, Khayer's younger brother, refuted the allegation.

Police picked up caretaker of the building Shamsu Mia, who failed to give any clue.

Amin filed a case with Lalbagh Police Station.

Ctg hartal

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The statement, signed by the committee chairman SM Jamal Uddin, rejected the call of the Chittagong chamber for the withdrawal of the hartal.

The chamber said it would impede the development of Chittagong and cripple the economy of the country.

8-hr hartal in Sylhet today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Arpita Sampatti Ain Pratirodh Andolan (vested property law resistance movement) called an 8-hour hartal today in Sylhet division to press home its demand.

The programme was announced at a meeting on September 30 by the Andolan, which has been agitating for repeal of the vested property law for the last 4 months.

A rally headed by city Mayor and city Awami League President Badar Ahmed Kamran was held yesterday at the central Shahid Minar with a call to make the hartal a success.

The Andolan was formed after a part of the historic Singha Bari was leased out to an influential group 4 months back.

Govinda Narayan Singha Majumder was the owner of the Singha Bari. Dignitaries like Rabinranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam and others had paid visits to the house, which is a property presently worth about Tk 4 crore in the city's Chouhatta area.

Barisal observes 30-minute strike demanding bridge over Padma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

In a rare display of unity cutting across traditional political boundaries, the Barisal City stopped dead in its tracks for 30 minutes yesterday demanding construction of the Padma Bridge at Mawa point.

Sirens went off, bells rang out and whistles were blown from mosques, factories, shops and commercial establishments at 11:00am to signal the start of the 30-minute strike.

Traffic came to a standstill, shops closed their shutters and work stopped at offices and other establishments during the strike observed amid great enthusiasm, spontaneity and discipline.

A small rally in front of the Ashwani Kumar Hall at the city centre was presided over by Golam Mawla, convener of the Executive Committee for the Padma Bridge at Mawa Point. Lawyers, cultural activists, freedom fighters, journalists and political leaders from both ruling and opposition parties addressed the rally.

Other programmes including meetings and human chains were also organised at different points of the city.

Organisers said similar programmes will be arranged simultaneously in all districts and cities of Barisal and Khulna, and parts of the Dhaka division.

Water crisis

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Yesterday was a day of processions on the campus by the students of the three dormitories, who carried placards announcing -- "water for life".

The VC, pro-VCs and the treasurer broke one of the gates open to free themselves after the demonstrators left the administrative building to stage a sit-in in front of the VC's residence.

Half an hour later, the pro-VCs tried to reach an understanding with the students, but their efforts relapsed into chaos leading the demonstrators to smash the gate of the VC's residence open and force their way in.

They snapped the power and telephone lines to the VC's residence and held a meeting inside, demanding resignation of the four top officials of the university. They threatened tougher programmes until their problem was resolved.

Prof Enamul Huq Khan said, "The crisis deepened as the private company tasked with installing a new pump, failed to do so. We handed the work to another company and it will take 10 days more."

Bail fixing

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am embarrassed to move any petition in his court," Rokanuddin said.

"I would expect that he would not be allowed to the judges' and lawyers' reception when the Supreme Court reopens on October 18 after vacation," he said.

"I would also expect that not only would he be removed, but his other offences be looked into as well."

"If he resigns, the Bar Council should also cancel his licence as lawyer," he said. "He also has to return the money he received from the person for fixing bail since it is tantamount to fraud."

"Such elements have desecralised the court," he went on.

Rokanuddin at a meeting of the Bar Association on October 1 alleged that Judge Shahidur reportedly received Tk 50,000 from a client for fixing a bail from the court of a judge friend in a woman repression case.

Rokanuddin also said the client then paid the amount and a petition was moved on August 25 in the bench comprising Justice Nazmun Ara and Justice MA Hafiz.

But her bail was rejected.

The CJ summoned the judge Tuesday and asked him to give his side of the story about the allegation.

AmCham awards

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efforts many women all over the country have been successful in starting their own enterprises, the chamber said.

Rokia, also chairperson of Media World, the company that owns The Daily Star, served as an adviser to the last caretaker government.

She has played a leading role in promotion and development of small and medium enterprises. She is also committed to education service as chairman of a private university, AmCham said.

Her business ventures include insurance, media, agro-industries, power and real estate. She is also on the boards of various social development organisations and foundations.

About Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, AmCham said the Starworld Hotels and Resorts Worldwide chain has long been promoting tourism in Bangladesh with its warm and caring service. Trevor MacDonald, general manager of the hotel, received the award.

Addressing the function, the US envoy praised AmCham for recognising business personalities but said that business community in Bangladesh had to face a lot of challenges because of corruption and lack of infrastructure.

Referring to the contribution of a large number of American companies to Bangladesh, he said by their presence they were sending messages to other companies in the US who are sceptical about investment in the South Asian nation.

AmCham President Aftab-ul-Islam said American investment in Bangladesh was stagnant because of growing problems relating to protection of invested property.

US companies want serious assurance from the government about the protection of their investment, continuity of government

Graft

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waste and delays and are often the cause of allegations of corruption and misuse of public resources.

According to some estimates, the economic losses due to corruption slows GDP growth by two to three percentage points a year, he told the audience.

The ADB views the Public Procurement Regulations 2003 as a major breakthrough for transparency and accountability in the procurement process and a major step in the harmonisation of procedures by development partners, he added.

River-link plan

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meeting.

On the comment of Indian river-link taskforce chief Suresh Prabhu that the mega plan would be beneficial for Bangladesh, Hafiz said: "We understand our benefits better. We don't need it to know from India what is beneficial to us."

The parliamentary committee also discussed implementation of the second phase of the Teesta Barrage, which is likely to raise food production by 2.77 lakh tonnes.

Sources said the barrage project was now awaiting approval of the Executive Committee on National Economic Council and would take three years for implementation.

Committee chief Martin told reporters that the meeting was briefed on the progress in implementation of five new and 60 ongoing projects of the ministry under the Annual Development Plan (ADP) in the fiscal 2003-04.

Officials concerned also briefed the meeting about the activities of the Water Resources Planning

policy, honouring existing contracts and prompt decision and implementation, he said.

"Doing business in Bangladesh is really difficult and becoming successful in business under the given circumstances is even harder," he said, in an oblique reference to complaints of Japanese foreign investors.

He urged the government to resolve the problems of foreign investors on a priority basis so that they feel secured about their investment.

The government should fulfil its pledges to foreign investors by improving law and order and cutting red tape, the AmCham chief said.

The chamber introduced the Business Executive Award in 1997 and Outstanding American Company Award in 1999 to recognise performance of business personalities and business entities.

Last year, Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group, won the Business Executive Award while Expeditors Bangladesh Ltd. clinched the Outstanding American Company Award.

Clarification

Darul Ihsan University in a clarification on a report headlined "Inadequacies in two universities found", run in The Daily Star's October 10 edition, said the comment "sponsors seemed to be driven by business motive, rather than charity for education" is baseless and unjustified.

The sponsors of Darul Ihsan University do not take even a farthing from the university fund. Whatever the fund is available is spent for the benefit, welfare and expansion of the university, the clarification said.

The members of the inspection team made some queries on academic and administrative affairs of Darul Ihsan University. The members of the Trust, the vice-chancellor, deans of the faculties, directors of the institutes and heads of the departments satisfactorily replied to the queries, it added.

Our Reply

The report did not mention that sponsors of the Darul Ihsan University were driven by business motive, rather than charity for education. The comment was made by a member of the inspection team on the overall situation at private universities.

Mofazzal Karim becomes high commissioner to UK

UNB, Dhaka

Retired secretary AH Mofazzal Karim has been appointed the next high commissioner of Bangladesh to the United Kingdom.

Mofazzal was born in Moulvibazar district in 1941. He obtained his Masters in English literature from Dhaka University in 1962 and joined the erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) in 1966.

He was secretary of the Ministry of Commerce (twice), secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and secretary of Ministry of Shipping.

After retirement, he joined the BNP. He is a member of the Council of Advisors to the BNP chairperson, said a press release.

Onion

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Chowdhury, to review the TCB report and take steps to check this rise in prices ahead of Ramadan.

The meeting suggested withdrawal of the 29.5 percent import duty on onion and lowering the Letter of Credit (LC) margin to 25 percent from the present 50 percent.

The proposal was sent to the finance ministry, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and the Bangladesh Bank (BB).

Postal workers

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police and handed a post office night guard and two night guards of the adjacent market over to them.

Agitated by the arrest of the night guards, the post office employees and officials went on a sudden strike and put the main gate of the post office under lock and key. They also brought out a procession and held a meeting demanding the release of the arrested night guards.

JU teachers

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teachers attended the meeting.

"We are demanding the VC's removal because he reneged on his promise to hold the VC panel election and also turned down our request for the election. The situation has compelled us to go for the boycott," said Prof Ali.

Juta also decided to boycott all administrative activities for an indefinite period until their demand is met.

The meeting also demanded immediate solution to the water crisis that has dogged the university for over three weeks.

Syndicate and Finance committee meetings have, however, been kept out of the purview of the strike.

The VC was not available for comment.

Indian states

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Among the chief ministers who are reported to have favoured the project include those of West Bengal and Assam.

Singh said while Nepal and Bhutan have understood the benefits of the project, Bangladesh had appreciated that its opposition was uncalled for as the scheme was still at the conceptual stage.

Gaza blast

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in Tel Aviv said: "I can confirm there were American casualties." Diplomatic sources later said all of the dead were Americans. The embassy advised all Americans to leave the Gaza Strip for their own safety.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Three Palestinian groups -- Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine -- denied involvement.

Militants, who accuse Washington of heavy bias in favour of Israel, have frequently detonated roadside bombs against Israeli troops and tanks operating in parts of the Gaza Strip.

But it was the first time that a convoy of US diplomats had been targeted in Israel or the Palestinian territories where violence has raged since a Palestinian uprising for statehood began in September 2000 after peace talks stalled.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat condemned the attack as "an ugly crime that targeted American observers as they were on their mission for security and peace" and he ordered an investigation, the official Palestinian news agency WAFAS said.

A Palestinian security source said the US delegation included a cultural attaché on the way to interview students hoping to receive scholarships to study in the United States.

"It is an unacceptable attack against foreign and diplomatic personnel," European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana said. He called on the Palestinian Authority "to bring to justice the perpetrators of this cowardly act."

Palestinian youths throwing stones forced US investigators to leave shortly after they arrived at the scene near the Jabalya refugee camp. Palestinian policemen at the scene fired automatic weapons in the air to disperse the stone-throwers.

Land registration

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can obtain all the services needed for the sale and purchase of land in one centralised space.

Talking to reporters after the second meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Land Law Reforms, Land Minister M Shamsul Islam said the committee is working to bring massive reform to the land law.

The reforms are also aimed at computerising the land management system and simplifying registration system.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar and State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Ukil Abdus Sattar attended the meeting. Land Secretary Azad Ruhul Amin, Law Secretary Asaduzzaman and members of the sub-committee were also present.

At the meeting, the three-member sub-committee headed by Habibul Awal, an additional secretary of the law ministry, presented a draft report on the amendment to the existing laws and the enactment of new ones necessary to bring the land laws up to date.

The land minister said land reform is an urgent task as land disputes have been identified as one of the root causes of social and family unrest. He said over 10 lakh cases are pending with courts and around 80 per cent of the cases are related to land.

The minister said steps have been taken to computerise the entire land management system and prepare a prescribed form for land registration. The proposed form would include all necessary data and it is hoped that it can be limited to a single page to facilitate the registration process.

He said tougher law would also be introduced to curb forged documentation and the sale of a particular piece of land to more than one person. He regretted that the laws relating to the punishment for forgery are too complex to be effective.

Terming the land management issue a complex one, the minister said the government is determined to make the system transparent and free from corruption.

He said under the new system, there will be only one document with

a map of the area concerned for each piece of land and all necessary data would be kept in a computerised system.

The minister said the sub-committee is due to submit its final report next month and the planned reforms will be finalised in the cabinet committee in light of the report. However, he said it would take time to complete the task of the committees because the land laws and system are highly complex.

He hoped the land reforms would greatly curb corruption, halt harassment and make the registration process simple, permitting the entire nation to benefit from the up-to-date system.

Once the reforms are implemented, social and family unrest would reduce drastically all over the country, the minister said. "If we examine the lakhs of pending cases, we will find that most of them are related to land. Even murders originated due to land disputes," he observed and hoped the new system would reduce the number of land cases filed.

Rangpur hartal

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college canteen at noon. He was admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where he died at about 3:00pm.

A murder case was filed with Kotwali Police Station on Tuesday. None was arrested in connection with the murder till yesterday evening.

Hitler was buried at Munshipara graveyard in the town yesterday noon.

Meanwhile, Carmichael College authorities held an emergency meeting yesterday morning with Acting Principal Ruhul Amin Munshi in the chair. The meeting formed a five-member committee headed by prof Nirod Baran Nath to probe the Tuesday's incident on the campus.

The committee has been asked to submit its report within seven days.

Iraq document

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between representatives of Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Syria.

"These countries were considered to have national, strategic interests in Iraq and are its closest neighbours," said a delegate.

The draft would be submitted for consideration to the summit, which begins this Thursday.

Among others, the draft condemned both the recent bombings of the Jordanian Embassy and the UN headquarters in Iraq, and the mass killings of Iraqis, Kuwaitis and Iranians by members of the previous regime.

It contained references to the "former Iraqi regime's policies contributing to the instability in the region over the past three decades, in particular its war in 1980 against its Muslims neighbour Iran, its aggression and occupation of the state of Kuwait in 1990 and its barbaric repression of the Iraqi people, and the consequences of those policies on the Islamic ummah."

Also included in the draft were:

For Iraq to "elect an internationally recognised representative government and to speedily restore its sovereignty";

For antiquities taken from Iraq during the US-led invasion to be returned;

For any resolution tabled at the

UN security council to allay misgivings and reassure the Iraqi people of their future;

For all states to not provide any safe haven for members of the former Iraqi regime;

For the reaffirmation of the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Iraq and full control over its own natural resources; and

That OIC members and other international organisations provide all kinds of support and assistance to meet the Iraqis' needs and encourage contributions and efforts aimed in reconstructing the country.

At a press conference at the end of the OIC Ministerial Preparatory Meeting yesterday, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the summit would include a plan of action to ensure ideas and proposals were followed through and implemented.

He said a communique would also be issued to ensure "nobody will feel left out."

On a related matter, he said the OIC did not propose to send any peacekeeping troops to Iraq.

He said the OIC, unlike the United Nations (UN), did not have the "blue beret."

However, Syed Hamid said OIC member countries could offer to send troops to Iraq in their own capacity.

Muslims gather

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The summit in Putrajaya, the newly built administrative capital of Malaysia, a half-hour drive south of Kuala Lumpur, will be the biggest meeting of Islamic leaders since their world was shaken by the fallout from the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

OIC secretary general Abdelouahed Belkheziz set the tone for the conference when he opened a preparatory meeting with the warning that the Muslim world faced dangers "probably unequalled in contemporary Islamic history."

Acknowledging the political and economic weakness of the OIC's 57 nations and 1.3 billion people, delegates have called for an Islamic "renaissance".

"Today we have to catch up (with the West)," said host Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

"And we can catch up, because Muslims are just as intelligent as anybody else."

Mahathir, asked at a news conference what the OIC could do about Israel's recent raid into member-state Syria, apart from condemn it, said: "We can go to war but we have no capacity to go to war. That's the problem, because we allow ourselves to become weak, people bully us."

The OIC reflects the wide cultural and demographic range of Islam, bringing the oil-rich Gulf states together with some of the world's poorest nations and the fledgling

Islamic republics born from the break-up of the Soviet Union.

It also reflects wide political differences, embracing Iran -- described by US President George W. Bush as part of an "axis of evil" -- along with Pakistan, considered one of Washington's strongest allies in the war on terrorism.

Booker

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history of the famed prize.

"It ain't coming to me," said Pierre, pseudonym for the British writer Peter Finlay. "It is about a third of what I owe in the world," he told reporters. "I am going to pay some debts."

Finlay has admitted to being a reformed drug addict and gambler, confessing that he sold his best friends' home and pocketed the proceeds.

He also said he had worked up massive debts in a scheme to make a film in Mexico.

"I am bringing my past into the future and will be happily having another crack at it. I intend paying all the money back and have already started doing so," he told Reuters before landing the prize and facing the full glare of media publicity.

"Regrets -- I am full of them," said the 42-year-old writer who was born in Australia, spent time in Mexico and now lives in Ireland.